

Walking the Walk – we can only walk together



Bishop John Roundhill at St Francis College, Milton with fellow pilgrims on his Brisbane to Burleigh 'Walk n Talk' Holy Week pilgrimage

Back from just over a week's walking, there is time to reflect on doing a talking pilgrimage. The walk from Brisbane to Burleigh was just over 160km spaced over eight days with the shortest walk being about 10km and the longest one a touch over 30km. The longest day's walk started at 7.30am and I finally put my stick down (apart from an interview and a short lunch break) at about 4.15pm. That is a lot of walking and it was a real delight to feel fully physically tired at the end of the day.

My walk took me through Redlands and then across and up into the Tamborine Mountain area before having a few days in the Gold Coast. I had not realised that I was going to experience such contrasting scenery during the different stages. Each was beguilingly beautiful, whether it was the softness of the landscape around Redlands, or the drama of the mountains, or the energy and buzz of a stormy and rainy Gold Coast.

For much of the 160km I had company and I am tremendously grateful to the parish guides who helped me in and out of destinations, particularly to Tamborine Mountain Parish, and who got me up and out without being on too many busy narrow roads. Some companions walked just a few kilometres with me, others much further. I am grateful for all the conversations; walking and talking seems to provide a context for honest sharing.

At other times, I was alone as I walked. Even though this was just an eight-day walk, life had a slightly different rhythm; governed more by hunger and thirst than by a clock. I mostly walked a steady 5km per hour and there was not much I could do to shift that. I was not going to go faster and I actually found it tough to go slower; the walk had its own pace and rhythm that had to be followed.

Help was not just with people escorting me in and out of places, but clergy welcoming me into their rectories and homes – and in Holy Week, one of the busiest weeks in the year! I am tremendously thankful not only to the clergy of these parishes, but also to their spouses who did so much. This is true for my wife, Frances Thompson, who helped by keeping me stocked with clean clothes. Even though it looked like this was a solo walk, it was in truth a group endeavour.

On Maundy Thursday after a good breakfast at St George's, Tamborine, I set off with a small group of walkers along Wongawallan Road. The surroundings were stunning and the weather perfect, and when we came upon a break in the

trees to the east of us, we were afforded a stunning view of the Gold Coast. My destination for tomorrow was in sight. It was a captivating view, the shining new towers framed by the natural woodland. This pilgrimage provided many such moments when all you could do, should do, was to give thanks.

One reason for doing this are the words from the Ordinal for a Bishop. The archbishop lists many things a bishop should do, including: "you must, therefore, know and be known by them (the people of God and be a good example to all)." It was good to have a simpler structure to my Holy Week and to be seen by congregations when I was tired and sweaty.

In his book *The Crossway*, Guy Stagg recounts that in 1986 fewer than 10 people a year walked the great pilgrimage route the Way of St James, the Camino de Santiago in Spain: "Since then the pilgrimage has been brought back to life and in 2010 a quarter of a million people have completed the distance." In 2016, according to [another source](#) 277,000 people walked the Camino. This is an extraordinary resurgence of an old and nearly forgotten practice. What is drawing people back to pilgrimage?

I had some time to ponder that question; walking has a curious blend of intimacy and isolation. Furthermore walking gets you in touch with the world around us, and its beauty. Lastly, walking a good distance is physically demanding, and can be a good way to connect mind and body. The stripping away of other things can leave you time with God. It is a fitting way to spend Holy Week.

Sunday Devotions • Tuesday 30 April 2019 • By The Rev'd Dr Graham Warren

Sunday Devotion: 12 May 2019, Fourth Sunday of Easter

Main readings: [Acts 9.36-43](#); [Ps 23](#); [Revelation 7.9-17](#); [John 10.22-30](#)

Supplementary readings: [Ps 95](#); [John 11.14-27](#); [Revelation 2.12-19 \(20-24\)](#), [25-29](#); [Ps 113](#); [Acts 10.1-7](#), [23-28](#)

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish." ([John 10.28](#))

My earliest memory of going into church as a little boy was being told by the grownups to be quiet. I was annoyed by this, as I thought it was boring. I had no idea that this might be a way to reverence the Holy One.

Carl Jung said that it was only in silence that he could recover his balance and go on with his work. Words tired him beyond measure. However, for many of us, silence is something we fear. Is this because it reminds us of death, as reflected in such idioms as 'deadly silence' and 'silent as the tomb'? The truth revealed in all four main readings today is that we have no need to fear death. John records Jesus saying, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish."

None of this makes any sense if we have the myopic view that what you see is all that you get. In this narrow and literal worldview, birth to death is nothing but a frantic fear-filled race to meaninglessness. However, we are spiritual beings, enjoying a short but beautiful bodily experience, with the hope of eternity.

The communion of saints knows this as they worship with us time immemorial. We are invited to join them.